

Warblington Farmhouse and Peggy Guggenheim

by Christine Bury

Marguerite 'Peggy' Guggenheim, born in New York in 1898, was a wealthy American. A socialite, bohemian and member of avant-garde literary circles, she moved to Europe in 1920. In later life Peggy Guggenheim became an internationally renowned collector of modern art, but her most domesticated years, when her children went to school nearby, were spent at Yew Tree Cottage near Petersfield from 1934-39. Today her art collection is housed in Venice on the Grand Canal at her former home, the Palazzo Venier dei Leoni.

So what brought this globe-trotting lady to Warblington in Hampshire?

After Peggy Guggenheim's marriage to American artist and writer Laurence Vail ended, she moved to England, first to Dartmoor and then to Hampshire in the 1930s. Peggy fell in love with the West Sussex countryside thanks to her lover, Douglas Garman, whose mother lived at South Harting. Prior to renting Yew Tree Cottage, Peggy took a five week lease during the summer on Warblington farmhouse.

She took possession on 7th July, 1934, having driven down from London laden with luggage and accompanied by her two children, Sinbad and Pegeen. Her friend Emily Coleman and son Johnny arrived a few days later. They travelled by train from Waterloo to Havant with 6 suitcases, 1 typewriter, 2 boxes, a tennis racquet, a sabre, 2 coats and other odds and ends. Coleman in her diary described the farmhouse as ravishing with great wide 18th century windows, perfect in proportions, looking out upon the garden. In the garden were the remains of a Tudor castle gatehouse and elms lined the moat.

During the five-week stay many family and friends visited. There was horse riding, tennis tournaments, card playing, trips to the cinema, picnics and sea bathing. Not to



mention that emotions often ran high with plenty of lively chat, arguments and drinking.

We know all this because of an exhibition on Guggenheim at the Petersfield Museum this summer to mark the 25th anniversary of the Museum and Art Gallery.

So where was the owner of Warblington Farmhouse at this time?

Sir Dudley Burton Napier North with his second wife, Eilean, and children lived in Warblington. North was a Naval officer and thus often away.

He was born in 1881 and had a long Naval career. In 1932 North became Director of Naval Operations and was appointed Flag Officer Commanding Royal Yachts from 1934-39. His career and the pageant held at his Warblington home were detailed in *The Emsworth Echo*, Issue No. 53, November 2021. North had married Eilean in 1923 and the couple had four children. It is quite possible that she too was away in the summer of 1934 and that the property had been rented out to such a cosmopolitan tenant.

Source:

Peggy Guggenheim Petersfield to Palazzo by Karole P B Vail and Louise Weller. Vail is Director of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice. Weller is Head of Collections and Exhibitions at Petersfield Museum and Art Gallery